Today's Lecture
1/23/09

- Finish Well-Crafted Arguments
- Argument Diagrams
- Overview of Midterm

Principle 5: Distinguish Subconclusions from Conclusions

Some premises support the conclusion directly:

(A1) Rain is wet, therefore something is wet.

Some premises directly support other premises, and so support the conclusion indirectly:

(A2) Sandra is a good housemate. Why? Well for one thing, she is conscientious. She does not blast her music when she knows you have a test the following morning.

example

(A3) You might think that we know a lot of things about the empirical world. But there are some basic things we do not know. Look, if you know that you are in a classroom, then you also know that you are not in the Matrix. But you don't know that you are not in the Matrix, as there is no test you could perform that would tell you for sure. Thus you do not know that you are in a classroom and thus there are some basic things we do not know about the empirical world.

subconclusions made explicit:

1. If you know that you are in a classroom, then you also know that you are not in the Matrix.
2. There is no test you could perform that would tell you for sure that you were in the Matrix.
3. So you don't know that you are not in the Matrix. *(subconclusion)*
4. So, you do not know that you are in a classroom. *(subconclusion)*
5. So there are some basic things we do not know about the empirical world.

Principle 6: Make Implicit Premises Explicit

Arguments with implicit premises are called *enthymemes* .

In some cases certain things are so obvious that it seems needless to point them out when providing or assessing an argument.

(A4) Not all planets are devoid of life. Earth has many living things.

The implicit premise here is that Earth is a planet. Since we all know this it usually will not be cited explicitly.

enthymeme example 1

(A5) Fetuses are persons, so intentionally killing a fetus is morally wrong.

What is the implicit premise here?

(*) Intentionally killing a person is morally wrong.

Well-crafted:

1) Fetuses are persons.
2) Intentionally killing a person is morally wrong.
3) So, intentionally killing a fetus is morally wrong.

enthymeme example 2

(A6) Paul Churchland holds that, strictly speaking, there are no such things as beliefs. But holding that view is obviously contradictory, so his view is false.

Implicit premise: Holding a view is a case of having a belief.

1) PC holds that, strictly speaking, there are no such things as beliefs.
2) Holding a view is a case of having a belief. (implicit)
3) So it is contradictory to hold that there are no beliefs.
4) So, PC's view is false.

enthymeme example 3

(A7) Bob plays basketball. Therefore Bob is tall.
Implicit premise: Hard to tell because there are options.

Option1: All basketball players are tall.
This makes the argument valid, but it is false.

Option2: 97.3% of basketball players are tall.
Nothing in (A5) indicates that the speaker has this in mind at all, so it is not a good choice.

Option3: Most basketball players are tall.
Of the three, this is the best option. It makes the argument strong, as the truth of the premises makes the conclusion likely to be true.

recap: well-crafted arguments

- Identify premises and conclusion
- Eliminate excess verbiage
- Employ uniform language
- Be fair and charitable
- Distinguish subconclusions from conclusions
- Make implicit premises explicit (if there are any)

diagrams

Arguments come in different structures:

- all premises jointly support the conclusion
- all premises separately support the conclusion
- one premise supports another, which in turn supports the conclusion

...and many others...

It is helpful to diagram arguments to illuminate their underlying inferential structure, especially if you are critiquing them.

diagram recipe

First, draw brackets around the premises and conclusion.

Second, number the bracketed statements.

Third, draw arrows to indicate inferential support.

diagram example 1

(A4) Something is green. Pine needles are green and ferns are green.

(A4) **1**[Something is green]. **2**[Pine needles are green] and **3**[ferns are green].

Note that **2** and **3** provide independent support for **1**.

diagram 1

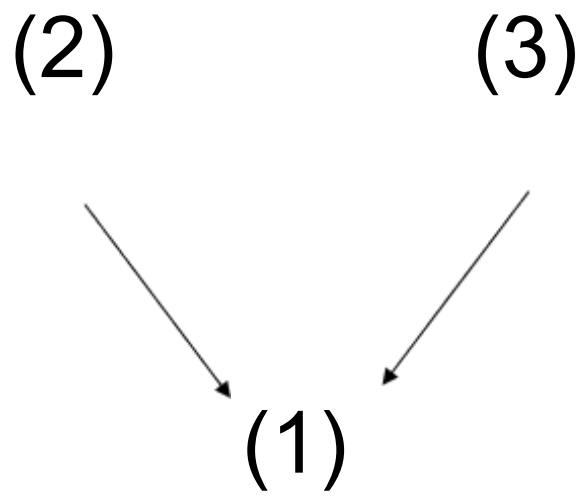


diagram example 2

(A4) Steven Pinker is giving a talk on the history of violence today only if he makes his flight. But Pinker missed his flight, so he is not giving the talk today.

(A4) **1**[Steven Pinker is giving a talk on the history of violence today only if he makes his flight]. **2**[But Pinker missed his flight], so **3**[he is not giving the talk today].

Note that (1) and (2) jointly support (3); their support for (3) is *interconnected* .

diagram 2

(1) + (2)

(3)

diagram example 3

(A4) Charles is unpleasant to work with because he interrupts people. Therefore, being on a committee with him would be a bad idea.

(A4) **1**[Charles is unpleasant to work with] because **2**[he interrupts people]. Therefore, **3**[being on a committee with him would be a bad idea].

Note that (2) supports (1), and (1) in turn supports (3).

diagram 3

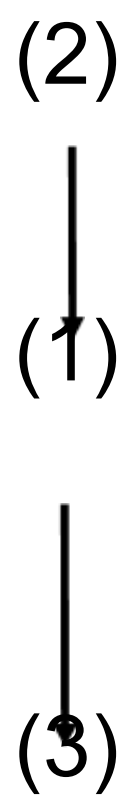


diagram strategies

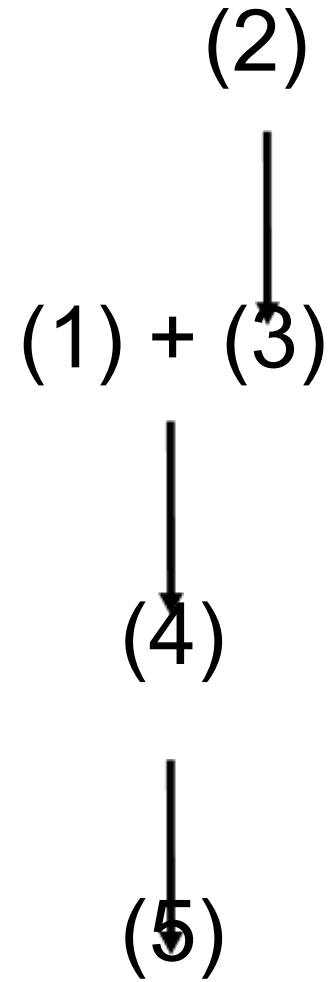
- With a reason-giving 'because' use different numerals for representing the premise and the (sub)conclusion.
- Represent (most) statements flanking 'and' and 'but' with different numerals.
- Conditionals and disjunctions should never be broken down into their parts.

e.g. 'If the Earth's orbit is elliptical, then it is not a perfect circle' should be represented using only one numeral, say,1.

Let's diagram this argument:

1. If you know that you are in a classroom, then you also know that you are not in the Matrix.
2. There is no test you could perform that would tell you for sure that you were in the Matrix.
3. So you don't know that you are not in the Matrix. *(subconclusion)*
4. So, you do not know that you are in a classroom. *(subconclusion)*
5. So there are some basic things we do not know about the empirical world.

diagram 3



Pg 103 #6

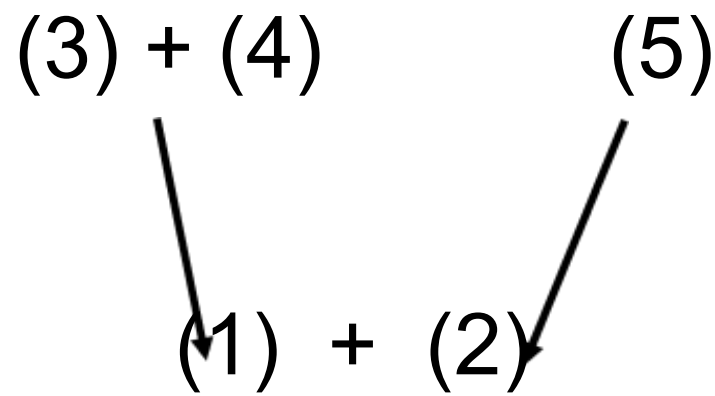
The legalization of drugs is neither unwise nor immoral. It is not unwise because by legalizing drugs we could eliminate the illegal drug trade. Hence, by legalizing drugs, we would rid our nation of all the violence that goes along with the illegal drug trade. Furthermore, the legalization of drugs is not immoral because it can be combined with a massive program of moral education.

Note: Neither P nor Q is equivalent to ***Not P and Not Q****.*

Pg 103 #6

1 [The legalization of drugs is not unwise] and **2** [the legalization of drugs is not immoral]. **1**[It is not unwise] because **3**[by legalizing drugs we could eliminate the illegal drug trade]. Hence, **4**[by legalizing drugs, we would rid our nation of all the violence that goes along with the illegal drug trade]. Furthermore, **2**[the legalization of drugs is not immoral] because **5**[it can be combined with a massive program of moral education].

diagram 4



midterm#1 on Monday

Material covered: chapter 1 – chapter 2

Topics:

- Basic concepts (validity, soundness, cogency etc.)
- Counter-examples: Statements and Categorical
- Distinguish arguments from non-arguments
- Well-crafted arguments
- Argument diagrams

Breakdown:

I: True/False
II: Fill in the _____.
III: Counter-examples
IV: Distinguish arguments and well-crafted arguments
V: Diagram(s)